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STATE FOR INR-B, WHA/BSC

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TAGS: PINR PGOV PREL PA

SUBJECT: PARAGUAY: NEW ATTORNEY GENERAL RUBEN CANDIA

AMARILLA BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Classified By: Susan S. Sutter for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Biographic information of the new Attorney General Ruben Candia Amarilla.

¶2. (U) Ruben Candia Amarilla replaced former Attorney General Oscar Latorre (2000-2005) after his five-year term expired at the end of August 2005. The Paraguayan Senate approved Candia's appointment on August 18, 2005, despite an unconfirmed allegation he had solicited a bribe as a judge and his work as a defense attorney on behalf of a well-known drug trafficker. Candia was hand picked by President Duarte for this position, which also prompted strong resistance from the opposition who believe the incumbent should be independent of the government.

¶3. (U) Prior to his appointment as Attorney General, Candia served as the Minister of Justice and Labor from May 2005-August 2005, replacing Juan Dario Monges, who resigned to further his career in Congress. Candia also served as a deputy labor minister and worked as a judge during the Stroessner government.

¶4. (S) Candia, a lawyer by training, also worked as a private criminal defense attorney. His clients included a well-known drug trafficker and several other high-level criminals. Candia maintains he worked these cases as a junior attorney and only defended these criminals to move ahead in the practice. In fact, in September, he requested a meeting with the Ambassador to clear his name as a reputed friend to drug traffickers. Sensitive reporting, however, indicates that Candia is heavily influenced by his close advisor, Victor Cogliolo Gonzalez, a former police commissioner who is known to be corrupt.

¶5. (S) In initial meetings with Embassy officials, Candia initially seemed apprehensive and unsure of his new role, making it difficult to read his allegiances. At one point he expressed great admiration for former Attorney General Oscar Latorre, but in another thought accused him of removing GOP files and sensitive equipment from the Public Ministry before his departure.

¶6. (U) Candia expressed support while meeting with Embassy officials, for continuing existing programs implemented by Latorre and for the unification of the Economic Crimes Unit and an Anti-Corruption Unit to facilitate increased information sharing with other GOP entities and the implementation of a case tracking system. He also expressed broad support for USG priorities and technical assistance programs already in progress. In addition, Candia stressed in statements to the press that his priorities as Attorney General were to strengthen investigative procedures and to ensure that the Public Ministry has the financial means to carry out successful investigations.

¶7. (U) Ruben Candia Amarilla is 50 years old.

¶8. (C) Comment: Though Candia publicly stated he is willing to stand up to corruption and has announced plans to reorganize the Public Ministry's office in CDE, at this stage, it may be too early to tell if Candia will follow through with supporting existing programs and USG priorities. He may be influenced by corrupt advisors and co-opted by the members of the corrupt system in Paraguay.

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